

T H E B R A H M A V Â D I N.

“एकं सत् विशाबहुधावदन्ति.”

“That which exists is One: sages call it variously.”—*Rigveda*, I. 164. 46.

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AGNI.

1. I praise the god Agni, the great high priest of sacrifice, the (divine) priest who invokes the gods and possesses great wealth.

2. Agni is worthy to be praised by the ancient seers as well as by those that are living now. May he bring the gods here.

3. Through Agni one obtains wealth which grows larger day by day, which is famous and most rich in heroes.

4. O Agni, that sacrifice, which you encompass all around and which is (thus) uninjured, goes truly to the gods.

5. May the god Agni, who is the invoking priest (of gods) and the possessor of wide-spread wisdom, who is truthful and most wonderfully famous, come hither with the gods.

6. Whatever blessing, Agni, you grant unto your worshipper, that, O Angiras, is truly to your own good.

7. O Agni, we come to you day by day consciously carrying our reverence both during day and night.

8. (We come to him) who is shining, who is the protector of the sacrifice and makes the eternal Law shine forth in splendour, and who is increasing in his own abode.

9. Be to us, O Agni, easy of approach, as a father is to his son. Be with us for our welfare.

Rigveda. 1. 1.

Agni is the god of fire.

Next to Indra, he is the most frequently invoked god in the *Rigveda*.

Sayana quotes from the *Brahmanas* to shew that Agni being the first and the last among the gods includes within himself all the gods.

All the Aryan peoples seem to have worshipped the gods in ancient times by means of sacrifices offered to them through the fire.

Agni is a god himself and is also a messenger of the gods.

THE SAYINGS OF ŚRĪ RĀMAKRISHNA PARAMAHAMSA.

1. As the water and its bubble are one ; as the bubble has its birth in the water, floats on the water and ultimately is resolved into water : so the *Jivātman* and the *Paramātman* are one and the same: the difference is in degrees, the one is finite and small, the other is infinite ; the one is dependent, the other independent.

2. As a large and powerful steamer moves swiftly over the waters, towing along flats and barges in its wake ; so when a Saviour descends, He easily carries thousands across the ocean of *Māya*.

3. When the flood comes, it inundates rivers and streams and makes one watery surface of all adjacent lands ; but the rain-water only flows away of itself through fixed channels. When a Saviour incarnates, all are saved through his grace. The *Siddhas* only save themselves with much pain and penance.

4. When a mighty log of wood floats down the stream, it carries on it hundreds and does not sink. A reed floating down may sink with the weight of even a crow. So when a Saviour incarnates innumerable are the men who find salvation by taking refuge under him. The *Siddha* only saves himself with much toil and trouble.

5. The locomotive engine reaches the destination itself and carries a long train of waggons also. So are the Saviours. They carry multitudes of men heavily laden with sin to the presence of the Almighty.

6. The seeds of *Bajrabantul* do not fall to the bottom of the tree. They are carried by the wind far off and take root there. So the spirit of a prophet manifests itself at a distance and he is appreciated there.

7. There is always a shadow under the lamp while its light illumines the surrounding objects. So the men in the immediate proximity of a prophet do not understand him. Those who live far off are charmed by his spirit and extraordinary power.

8. What is the necessity of calling a particular man *Guru*, instead of everyone who teaches us something? As when going to a strange country one must abide by the directions of the guide who knows the way, while acting upon the advice of many may lead to confusion ; so in trying to reach God, one must follow implicitly the advice of the *Guru*. This shows the necessity for a single *Guru*.

Whoever can himself call on the Almighty with sincerity and intense earnestness of soul, needs no *Guru*. But such deep yearning of the soul is very rare ; hence the necessity for a *Guru*. The *Guru* is only one, but *Upa-Gurus* may be many. He is an *Upa-Guru* from whom anything whatsoever is learned. The Great *Āradhita* had twenty-four such *Upa-Gurus*.

9. The fabled pearl-oyster leaves its bed at the bottom of the sea, and comes up to the surface to catch the rain water when the star *Svāti* is in the ascen-

dant. It floats about on the surface of the sea with its shell wide open until it succeeds in catching a drop of the marvellous *Svāti*-rain. Then it dives down to its sea bed and there rests till it has succeeded in fashioning a beautiful pearl out of that rain drop. Similarly there are some true and eager aspirants who travel from place to place in search of that watch-word, from a godly and perfect preceptor (*satguru*), which will open for them the gate of eternal bliss and if in their diligent search one of them is fortunate enough to meet such a *guru* and get from him the much longed for *logos* which is sure to break down his fetters, he at once retires from society and enters into the deep recess of his own heart and rests there till he has succeeded in gaining eternal peace.

10. In the month of June a young goat was playing near his mother, when with a merry frisk he told her that he meant to make a feast of *Rās*-flowers, a species of flowers budding abundantly during the time of *rāsikā* festival. "Well my darling," replied the dam, "it is not such an easy thing as you seem to think. You will have to pass through many crises before you can hope to feast on *Rās*-flowers. The interval between the coming September and October is not very auspicious to you ; for, some one may take you for a sacrifice to the Goddess *Durgā* ; then again you will have to get through the time of *Kālī*-pūja, and if you are fortunate enough to escape through that period, there comes the *Jagaddhātri*-pūja when almost all the surviving male members of our tribe are extirpated. If your good luck leads you safe and sound through all these crises then you can hope to make a feast of *Rās*-flowers in the beginning of November." Like the dam in the fable we should not hastily approve of all the aspirations which our youthful hopes may entertain about us, by remembering the manifold crises which one will have to pass through in the course of one's life.

11. As the fly now sits on the unclean sore of the human body and now on the offerings dedicated to the gods, so the mind of the worldly man is at one time deeply engaged in religious topics and at the next moment loses itself up in the pleasures of wealth and lust.

12. The body is transient and unimportant. Why then is it so much looked after?

No one does care for an empty box. But people carefully preserve the box that contains money and other valuable property. The virtuous cannot but take care of the body, the temple of the soul in which God has manifested himself or which has been blessed by god's advent.

13. How long does godliness remain in man?

The Iron is red so long as it is in fire. It is black the moment it is removed from fire. So the human being is godly so long as he is in communion with god.

14. Soft clay admits of forms, but the burnt clay does not. So those, whose hearts are consumed with the desire of worldly things, cannot realize higher ideas.

The Brahmavadin

SATURDAY, 28TH MARCH 1896.

THE VEDA'NTIC EXPLANATION OF THE PROBLEM OF EVIL.

The Brihadâraṇyaka-Upanishad says that "There were two kinds of descendants of Prajapati, the Devas and the Asuras;" and that "the Devas were indeed the younger, the Asuras the elder ones." These Devas and Asuras are, in the language of the Upanishads, our innate propensities to good and to evil, and the poet of the Upanishad ascribes seniority of birth to the evil impulses in man. The two sets of motive forces struggled for supremacy and made successively speech, breath, the eye and the ear the subject-matter of their fight; and these proved unreliable bases of operations to the Devas; and they were discomfited. Their next refuge was the human mind and even that proved a slippery support, and they fled at last to "Prâna", and though the Asuras "rushed at him and pierced him with evil," they were "scattered in all directions and perished, as a ball of earth striking against a stone." Thus is man frail to overcome the evil that has its root in himself, unless it be with the grace of the Lord. The Asuras know neither charity, nor faith; and are immersed in the affairs of this world in consequence. But in the end they are doomed to defeat and destruction; and the Devas have been, and will be, the victors.

But for the nonce evil and misery are undeniable facts of the world. There is evil in the mind of man, and also in the processes of nature, as these processes are interpreted by us. And it has been universally held that the paramount duty of man upon earth is to amend himself, and if possible, to amend the ways of nature: But the question regarding the origin of this evil is inevitable and has taxed the thinkers of all ages and countries. And we shall see what answers may be given them from the stand-point of Vedântism.

Modern science has travelled far beyond the dogma of original sin; and the date of the first parents of man and of their transgression has been pushed back by countless aeons; and the garden of Eden has also been removed from the precincts of the earth to unknown regions beyond. The attempt of Christian Theology to explain away the evil in the world as the just doom on man for the sin of the first created pair, subjected as they were to the audacious and unfetterable tempter, is a poor explanation of the phenomenon, and as a fable must be relegated to the limbo of the mythical childhood of the human intellect. The Asuras of the Vedânta fight with the

Devas in the arena of human consciousness, but perish at their first contact with the Divine element in them; these Vedântic Asuras do not stand in the presence of their maker, able to disturb "Heavens' blessed peace," and to bring misery into nature, "increased till the crime of their rebellion." They now exist and have always been in existence; but their sphere of action is circumscribed and they are never known to have "hurled their proud defiance" even at the earnest seeker after truth, much less at any power higher than man.

The Biological Sciences have laid bare the history of the growth of the human body, and with it of the human mind; and we know the special forces that have been at work to give their peculiar impress upon his physical and mental configuration. The tendencies in him which are ethically objectionable are known to be the products of his genesis and the conditions of the stability of the race in the unceasing struggle for existence. The universal tendency in us to please ourselves, without the least reference to what may be going on in the world outside us, is our inheritance, according to the Biologist, "from the long series of ancestors, human, semi-human and brutal, in whom the strength of this innate tendency to self-assertion was the condition of victory in the struggle for existence." These inherited tendencies have been the bases of our evolution and growth against the destructive forces of nature which are arrayed in unceasing hostility to us. If these constitute a taint in man's nature, it is a taint in the absence of which he will be nowhere in his struggle against his co-occupants of the world; and his self-assertiveness has saved him from complete effacement. And the reason that dictates self-preservation as the first law of nature seems to uphold this side of human conduct, not simply as the condition under which evolution has been possible hitherto, but also as the indispensable motor force to ensure the future progress of man. It is a well-known fact in regard to human advancement that there is no halting place in it, and that the only alternatives are continuous progress or equally continuous retrogression. If man does not make way onwards in the struggle, he cannot possibly be in possession of the ground already won, and must gradually be moving backwards. It follows, therefore, that the force that has propelled the species in the path of progressive evolution must continue to act upon it for ever and ever, if the progress is to be continuous.

It is not man alone that is thus marked with indelible evil. Nature appears to be equally at fault in this respect; and the Supreme Artisan, to think of Him as such, does not seem to have succeeded in making her ways perfect. Such wonders of adaptations as are revealed to the superficial observer induce him to see the hand of perfection everywhere; and his newly-awakened reverence would even make him accept her as his spiritual ideal and moral guide. Life after nature was the dogma of the period of

the first dawn of reason when the untaught mind was exultant over the discovery of order where before universal chaos bewildered its vision. Nature thus became the rule or standard of what ought to be. But a clearer apprehension of nature's ways showed the absurdity of the notion that the ways of Providence are revealed in her processes. "Her ways are proverbially reckless; she accomplishes her ends by the most cruel of means. She abridges the allotted term of human life in all the modes, violent and insidious, in which the worst human beings take the lives of one another. Nature impales men, breaks them as if on the wheel, casts them to be devoured by wild beasts, burns them to death, crushes them with stones like the first Christian martyr, starves them with hunger, poisons them by the quick or slow venom of her exhalations, and has hundreds of other hideous deaths in reserve, such as the ingenious cruelty of a Nabis or a Domitian never surpassed. All this nature does with the most supercilious disregard both of mercy and justice, emptying her shafts upon the best and noblest indifferently with the meanest and worst. She mows down those on whose existence hangs the well-being of a whole people, perhaps the prospects of the human race for generations to come, with as little compunction as those whose death is a relief to themselves, or a blessing to those under their noxious influence." Such is nature! So wanton is she in the infliction of her tortures!

Various have been the attempts of the advocates of the benevolent order of nature to explain away these enormities. It has been said, for instance, that the ways of God are always for wise and good ends, even though the immediate purpose of individual events may be veiled in mystery to our vision. But what wisdom or goodness there can be in pestilence, in epidemics, and in storms and hurricanes, it passes the power of man to explain; and how much so ever we may draw upon our indulgent imagination to invent a justification for them, our reason refuses to accept our inventions, and leaves the disorders of nature as imperfections in the cosmos. Some say that good comes out of evil and that we may therefore tolerate the latter because of the resulting good. This argument must apply as much to the evil in man as to the evil in nature; and the evils in us must be productive of good, and must therefore be intended for wise and benevolent ends. This plea in favor of evil makes it a necessary element in the providential administration of the universe, and seems to contradict the necessity of eradicating the evil in us, a theme upon which moralists have wasted such eloquent exhortations. Human wickedness is especially opprobrious to the moralist, and has invariably been condemned by him. But few have had the boldness to record an adverse verdict regarding Divine skill as it is exhibited in nature, though in regard to man they will stick the evil on to him and absolve the Creator of all responsibility for it. But "brought

before the tribunal of ethics, the cosmos cannot but be condemned." And the universal experience of mankind testifies to the fact that "whether we look within us or without us, evil stares in the face on all sides; that if anything is real, pain and sorrow and wrong are realities."

Before taking up the Vedântin's explanation of this evil in us and outside us, we should premise that on a careful analysis nature may be absolved of the wickedness which we have traced to her door. The evil which we say is discoverable in her is entirely a creation of humanity, or rather of sentiency. Apart from man's conception of it, there is and can be no evil in the material world as such. The forces of nature go their several ways and each does its appointed task; and in this there is no question of good or evil. In the revolution of the earth round the sun, in the flight of clouds and in the flow of rivers, in thunder, lightning and storms, and in all the so-called beneficent or maleficent acts of nature, there can be no talk of morality or immorality. Pain and pleasure are purely the products of sentiency, and to sentient creatures alone do they exist. Take the universe by itself, and pain, pleasure and evil have no place in it; but when we introduce sentient existence into it, there arises the conception of evil along with the sensibility to pleasure and pain:

The clouds that gather round the setting sun
Do take a sober coloring from an eye
That hath kept watch o'er man's mortality.

It need not be determined here whether in its genesis evil is dependent, in whole or in part, upon these sensibilities to pleasures or pains or is independent of them. There can be no doubt of the fact that it is exclusively the accompaniment of sentiency, human and sub-human. It follows from this that in discussing the question of its origin in the universe, we have to take it up only in connection with animal creation.

The Vedântic philosophy is fully alive to the difficulty underlying the ethical basis of creation; and its conception of the universe is in full accord with all the observed facts. The universe is in a sense unreal, but is yet eternal; it may be conceived as unsubstantial, but has yet its support in the supreme Brahman. It is what we find it to be, not because of any intention or will or wisdom on the part of the creator, but because of the specific features in its constituent elements. As a whole, the universe has persisted in the past as it persists in the present, and will persist for ever. It is a whole made up of the Creator and the created. The latter is not a part that stands in isolation from its original source. The world is but a manifestation of the *Brahman*, and a manifestation into which He permeates as its universal Soul. This is the conception of creation as formed by the Vedânta. The Katha-Upanishad says for example: "He is the sun dwelling in the high heaven, He is the air dwelling in the sky; He is the fire dwelling on the hearth;...He dwells in men, in gods, in

the sacrifice, in heaven; He is born in the water, on earth, in the rita, on the mountains; He is the true and the Great." "Of Him is the whole world full," says the Mundaka-Upanishad. The all-comprehensiveness thus ascribed to God has been misinterpreted by a few critics because of their inability to realise the grandeur and the truth of the Vedântic conception of the supreme. And Pantheism has been employed as a term of reproach only by narrow sectarians who have never felt the absurdity of investing the Omnipresent with our own puny form and have never realised to themselves the vast significance contained in such terms as Omnipresence, Omniscience, &c., a significance which is to them but a fossilized sound.

To the Vedântin then the universe is but the phenomenal side of the eternal *Brahman*. It is eternal in as much as there could not possibly have been a time when God stood in lonely grandeur, not having started the cosmic forces in their course to evolutionary progress, the *Brahman* never stood alone by Himself. He is but one; yet the phenomenal, whether it stands merged in Him or whether it is the warp, the *Brahman* running like the wool through and through, is inseparably bound up with Him. It is the spokes, and *Brahman* the wheel. "The immortal *Brahman* is in front, it is behind, it is to the right and also to the left; it is below and above; it is spread everywhere; the *Brahman* itself is all this universe, it is the best."—*Mundaka*, 2-2-11.

Such being the intimate relation that subsists between the *Brahman* and the universe, the question is whether we can account for the presence in it of evil. We have already seen that evil is essentially, connected with sentiency and with it alone. It is entirely a relative aspect of what otherwise has no such ethical import. What is colorless in itself assumes the form of evil when brought into relation with *Jiva*. And this change of form by things indifferent because of their contact with sentiency is explained by the doctrine of *Karma*. Consciousness carries with it, as we have said above, the burden of pains and pleasures; and along with these goes the load of evil. Existence means the experience of pains and pleasures; and hence contact with evil. To feel is to feel pleasure or pain, the state of indifference being wholly an impossibility or at least a rarity. The quantum of pains and pleasures and hence the quantum of evil and good which each sentient existence is to receive is determined by its deserts. This leads us to the Vedântic doctrine of *Karma* and transmigration of souls. It is unnecessary to state this doctrine here in detail, and space forbids it even were it necessary. But we cannot but quote the following remarks of Prof. Huxley on this theory, to show that it is not unworthy of the consideration even of the modern men of reason: "It is no less plausible than others; and none but very hasty thinkers will reject it on the ground of inherent absurdity. Like the doctrine of evolution itself,

that of transmigration has its roots in the world of reality; and it may claim such support as the great argument from analogy, is capable of supplying."

Thus is the evil in the world traced by the Vedânta to the presence of sentient existence in it and to the burden of *Karma* it carries along with it. The cosmic forces in their evolutionary march impinge upon the sentient *Jivas* and are transformed into pains and pleasures according to their respective deserts. That this theory has a "substantial basis in reality" and that it has the support of "the great argument from analogy" have been admitted by such a declared agnostic as Prof. Huxley. It is therefore incumbent upon us to give it our respectful attention and not reject it with "hasty" impudence.

This evil so present in the universe can be overcome according to the Vedânta by self discipline, which presents the only way of escape from it. When man shows that he is conscious of his inmost nature, he becomes worthy of himself and the evil that he knew serves to raise him up to a higher sphere:

How strange, that all
The terrors, pains and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself!

BHAKTI-YOGA.

BY

SWA'MI VIVEKANANDA.

(Continued from page 166.)

Such is our philosophical conception of *Īśvara*. To the *Bhakta* these dry details are necessary only to strengthen his will; beyond that they are of no use to him. For he is treading on a path which is fitted very soon to load him beyond the hazy and turbulent regions of reason, to lead him to the realm of realisation. He soon, through the mercy of the Lord, reaches a plane where pedantic and powerless reason is left far behind and the mere intellectual groping through the dark gives place to the daylight of direct perception. He no more reasons and believes, he almost perceives. He no more argues, he senses. And is not this seeing God, and feeling God, and enjoying God, higher than everything else? Nay, *Bhaktas* have not been wanting who have maintained that it is higher than even *Moksha*—liberation. And is it not also the highest utility? There are people—and good many of them too—in the world who are convinced that only that is of use and utility which brings to man creature-comforts. Even religion, God, Eternity, Soul, none of these is of any use, unless it brings them money or physical comfort. To such there is nothing which is of any utility if it does not go to gratify the senses and appease the appetites.

In every mind utility is conditioned by its own peculiar wants. To men therefore, who never rise higher than eating, drinking, begetting progeny, and dying, the only gain is in sense enjoyments; and they must wait and go through many more births and re-incarnations to learn to feel even the faintest necessity for anything higher. But those to whom the eternal interests of the soul are of much higher value than the fleeting interests of this mundane life, to whom the gratification of the senses is but like the play of the baby, to them God and the love of God form the highest and the only utility of human existence. Thank God! there are some such yet left in the world.

This *Bhakti-Yoga*, as ye have said, is divided into the *gaurāṅgī* (*gaunī*) or preparatory, and *parā* (*parā*) or supreme. We shall find as we go on how in the preparatory stage we absolutely require many concrete helps to enable us to get on; and, indeed, the mythological and symbolical parts of all religions are natural growths which early environ the aspiring soul and help it Godward. It is also a significant fact that spiritual giants have been produced only in those systems of religion where there is an exuberant growth of rich mythology and ritualism. The dry fanatical forms of religion which attempt to eradicate all that is poetical, all that is beautiful and sublime, all that gives a firm grasp to the infant mind tottering in its Godward way—the forms which attempt to break down the very ridge poles of the spiritual roof, and in their ignorant and superstitious conception of truth try to drive away all that is life-giving, all that furnishes the formative material to the spiritual plant growing in the human soul—such forms of religion too soon find that all of what is left to them is but an empty shell, a contentless frame of words and sophistry, with perhaps a little flavor of a kind of social scavengering or the so-called reformation. The vast mass of those whose religion is like this are conscious or unconscious materialists—the end and aim of their lives here and hereafter being enjoyment, which is to them the alpha and omega of human life, and which is their *ishṭapūrta* *ishṭapūrta*; work like street-cleaning and scavengering intended for the material comfort of man is, according to them, the “be-all” and “end-all” of human existence; and the sooner the followers of this curious mixture of ignorance and fanaticism come out in their true colors and join, as they well deserve to do, the ranks of atheists and materialists, the better will it be for the world. One ounce of practice and spiritual self-realisation outweighs tons and tons of frothy talk and nonsensical sentiments. Show us one, but one, gigantic spiritual genius growing out of all this dry dust of ignorance and fanaticism; and if you cannot close your mouths, open the windows of your hearts to the clear light of truth, and sit like children at the feet of those that know what they are talking about—the sages of India. Let us then listen attentively to what they say.

Every soul is destined to be perfect, and every being, in the end, will attain the state of perfection. Whatever we are now, is the result of our acts and

thoughts in the past; and whatever we shall be in the future, will be the result of what we think and do now. But this, our shaping of our own destinies, does not preclude our receiving help from outside; nay, in the vast majority of cases such help is absolutely necessary. When it comes, the higher powers and possibilities of the soul are quickened, spiritual life is awakened, growth is animated, and man becomes holy and perfect in the end.

This quickening impulse cannot be derived from books. The soul can only receive impulses from another soul, and from nothing else. We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectual; but, in the end, we find that we have not developed at all spiritually. It does not follow at all that a high order of intellectual development always goes hand in hand with a proportionate development of the spiritual side in man.

In studying books, we are sometimes deluded into thinking that we are being spiritually helped; but if we analyse ourselves we shall find that at the utmost it is only our intellect that has profited from those studies but not the inner spirit. This insufficiency of books to quicken spiritual growth is the reason why although almost every one of us can *speak* most wonderfully on spiritual matters, when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we find ourselves so awfully deficient. To quicken the spirit, the impulse *must* come from another soul.

The person from whose soul this impulse comes is called the *Guru*—the teacher; and the person to whose soul the impulse is conveyed is called the *Śishya*—the student. In order to convey this impulse, in the first place, the soul from which it proceeds must possess the power of transmitting it, as it were, to another; and, in the second place, the soul to which it is transmitted must be fit to receive it. The seed must be a living seed, and the field must be ready ploughed; and when both these conditions are fulfilled a wonderful growth of genuine religion takes place. “The true preacher of religion has to be of wonderful capabilities, and clever shall his bearer be!”

आश्चर्यो वक्ताकुशलोऽस्य श्रोता ;

and when both of these are really wonderful and extraordinary, then alone will splendid spiritual awakening result, and not otherwise. Such alone are the real teachers, and such alone are also the real students. All others are only playing with spirituality. They have just a little curiosity awakened, just a little intellectual aspiration kindled in them, but are merely standing on the outward fringe of the horizon of religion. There is, no doubt, some value even in that, as it may, in course of time, result, in the awakening of a real thirst for religion; and it is a mysterious law of nature that, as soon as the field is ready, the seed *must* and does come, as soon as the soul earnestly desires to have religion, the transmitter of the religious force *must* and does appear to help that soul. When the power that attracts the light of religion in the receiving soul is full and strong, the power which answer to

that attraction and sends in light does come as a matter of course.

There are, however, certain great dangers in the way. There is, for instance, the danger to the receiving soul of its mistaking momentary emotions for real religious yearning. We may study that in ourselves. Many a time in our lives, somebody dies whom we loved; we receive a blow; we feel that this world is slipping between our fingers, that we want something surer and higher, and that we must become religious. In a few days that wave of feeling has passed away, and we are left stranded just where we were before. We are all of us often mistaking such impulses for real thirst after religion; but as long as these momentary emotions are thus mistaken, that continuous, real, craving of the soul for religion will not come, and we shall not find the true transmitter of spirituality into our nature. So, whenever we are tempted to complain of our search after the truth that we desire so much proving vain, instead of so complaining, our first duty ought to be to look into our own souls, and find whether the craving in the heart is real. Then in the vast majority of cases it will be discovered that we were not fit for receiving the truth, that there has been no real thirst for spirituality.

There are still greater dangers in regard to the transmitter, the *Guru*. There are many who, though immersed in ignorance, yet, in the pride of their hearts, fancy they know everything, and not only do not stop there, but offer to take others on their shoulders, and thus the blind leading the blind, both fall into the ditch.

“अविद्यायामन्तरेवर्तमानास्वयंवीराः पण्डितंमन्यमानाः”

“जह्वन्वमानाः परियन्तिमूढा अन्धेनैवनीयमानायथान्वाः”

“Fools dwelling in darkness, wise in their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round staggering to and fro, like blind men led by the blind.”—(*Mund. Up.*, 1, 2, 8).

The world is full of these. Every one wants to be a teacher, every beggar wants to make a gift of a million dollars! Just as these beggars are ridiculous, so are these teachers.

How are we to know a teacher then? The sun requires no torch to make him visible, we need not light a candle in order to see him. When the sun rises, we instinctively become aware of the fact, and when a teacher of men comes to help us, the soul will instinctively know that truth has already begun to shine upon it. Truth stands on its own evidences, it does not require any other testimony to prove it true, it is self-effulgent. It penetrates into the innermost corners of our nature, and in its presence the whole universe stands up and says “This is truth.” The teachers whose wisdom and truth shine like the light of sun are the very greatest the world has known, and they are worshipped as gods by the major portion of mankind. But we may get help from comparatively lesser ones also; only we ourselves do not possess intuition enough to judge well of the man from whom we receive teaching and guidance; so there ought to be certain

tests, certain conditions for the teacher, to satisfy as there are for the taught.

The conditions necessary for the taught, are purity, a real thirst after knowledge, and perseverance. No impure soul can be really religious. Purity in thought, speech, and act, is absolutely necessary for any one to be religious. As to the thirst after knowledge, it is an old law that we all get whatever we want. None of us can get anything other than what we fix our hearts upon. To pant for religion truly is a very difficult thing, not at all so easy as we generally imagine. Hearing religious talks, reading religious books, is no proof yet of a real want felt in the heart; there must be a continuous struggle, a constant fight, an unremitting grappling with our nature, till the want is felt and the victory is achieved. It is not a question of one or two days, of years, or of lives, but the struggle may have to go on for hundreds of life-times. The success sometimes may come immediately, but we must be ready to wait patiently even for what may be an infinite length of time. The student who sets out with such a spirit of perseverance will surely find success and realisation at last.

In regard to the teacher, we must see that he knows the spirit of the scriptures. The whole world reads Bibles, Vedas, Qurans, or all these; but they are all only words, syntax, etymology, philology, the dry bones of religion. The teacher who deals too much in words, and allows the mind to be carried away by the force of words, loses the spirit. It is the knowledge of the *spirit* of the scriptures alone that constitutes the true religious teacher. The network of the words of the scriptures is like a huge forest in which the human mind often loses itself and finds no way out.

शब्दजालमहारण्यं चित्रभ्रमणकारणं

“The network of words is a big forest; it is the cause of curious wanderings.” The various methods of joining words, the various methods of speaking in beautiful language, the various methods of explaining the diction of the scriptures, are only for the disputations and enjoyment of the learned; they do not tend to conduce to the development of spiritual perception.

वाग्वैखरिशब्दशीरशास्त्रव्याख्यान कौशलं

वेदुष्यविदुषातद्वत् भुक्तये ननु मुक्तये

Those who employ such methods to impart religion to others are only desirous to show off their learning, so that the world may praise them as great scholars. You will find that no one of the great teachers of the world ever went into these various explanations of the texts; there is with them no attempt at “text-fortifying,” no eternal playing upon the meaning of the words and their roots. Yet they nobly taught, while others, who have nothing to teach, have taken up a word sometimes and written a three volume book on its origin, on the man who used it first, and on what that man used to eat, and how long he used to sleep, and so on.

Bhagavān Rāmakrishna used to tell a story of some men who went into a mango orchard and busied themselves in counting the leaves, the twigs, and the branches, examining their color, comparing their size, and noting down everything most carefully, and then got up a learned discussion on each of these topics highly interesting to them. But one of them, more sensible than the others, did not care for all these things, but, instead, began to eat the mango fruit. And was he not wise? So leave this counting of leaves and twigs and this note-taking to others. This kind of work has its proper place, but not here in the spiritual domain. You have never once seen a strong spiritual man among these "leaf-counters." Religion, the highest aim, the highest glory of man, does not require so much labour as leaf-counting. If you want to be a *Bhakta* it is not at all necessary for you to know where Krishna was born, in Mathura or in Vraja, what he was doing, or just the exact date on which he pronounced the teachings of the *Gītā*. You only require to *feel* the craving for the lessons of duty and love in the *Gītā*. All the other particulars about it and its author are for the enjoyment of the learned. Let them have what they desire. Say "*sāntih, sāntih*" to their learned controversies, and let us eat the mangoes.

The second condition necessary in the teacher is—sinlessness. The question is often asked, "Why should we look to the personality of a teacher? We have only to judge of what he says, and take that up." This is not right. If a man wants to teach me something of dynamics, or chemistry, or any other physical science, he may be any thing he likes, because what the physical sciences require, is merely an intellectual equipment; but in the spiritual sciences it is impossible from first to last that there can be any spiritual light in the soul that is impure. So what can an impure man teach? The *sine qua non* of acquiring spiritual truth for one's self or for imparting to others is the purity of heart and soul.

A vision of God, or a glimpse of the beyond, never comes until the soul is pure. Hence with the teacher of religion we must see first what he is, and then what he says. He must be perfectly pure, and then alone comes the value of his words, because he is only then the true "transmitter." What can he transmit, if he has not spiritual power in himself? There must be worthy vibration in the mind of the teacher so that it may be sympathetically conveyed to the mind of the taught. It is indeed a question of transference, and not one of a mere stimulation of existing intellectual faculties. Something real and tangible comes from the teacher, and goes to the taught. Therefore the teacher must be pure.

The third condition is in regard to the motive. The teacher must not teach with any ulterior selfish motive, for money, name, or fame; his work must be simply out of love, out of pure love for mankind at large. The only medium through which spiritual force can be transmitted is love. Any selfish motive, such as the desire for gain or for name, would immediately destroy this conveying medium.

God is love, and only he who has known God as love can be a teacher of Godliness and God to man.

When you see that in your teacher these conditions are all fulfilled, you are safe; if they are not, it is unsafe to allow yourself to be taught by him, for there is the great danger that, if he cannot convey goodness into your heart he may convey wickedness. This danger must by all means be guarded against. श्रीत्रयीऽवृजिनोऽकामहतोयोब्रह्मवित्तमः— "He who is learned, sinless and unpolluted by lust is the greatest knower of the *Brahman*."

From what has been said, it naturally follows that we cannot be taught to love, appreciate, and assimilate religion everywhere and by everybody. The "sermon in stones, brooks in running brooks, and good in everything" is all very true as a poetical figure: but no man can impart to another a single grain of truth until he has it in himself. To whom do the stones and brooks preach sermons? To the human soul the lotus of whose inner holy life has already been opened. And the light which causes the beautiful opening-out of this lotus comes always from the good and wise teacher. When the heart has thus been opened, it becomes fit to receive teaching from the brooks, or the stars, or the sun, or the moon, or from anything which has its existence in the universe; but the unopened heart will see in them nothing but mere stones and mere brooks. A blind man may go to a museum, but he will not profit by it in any way; his eyes must be opened first, and then only he will be able to learn what the things in the museum can teach.

This eye-opener of the aspirant after religion is the teacher. With the teacher, therefore, our relationship is that between an ancestor and his descendant. Without faith, humility, submission, and veneration in our hearts to our religious teacher, there can not be any growth of religion in us; and it is a significant fact that, where this kind of relation between the teacher and the taught prevails, there alone gigantic spiritual men are growing, while in those countries which have neglected to keep up this relation, the religious teacher has become a mere lecturer, the teacher expecting his five dollars, and the person taught expecting his brain to be filled with the teachers words, and each going his own way after this is done. Under such circumstances spirituality becomes almost an unknown quantity. There is none to transmit it, and none to have it transmitted to. Religion with such people becomes business, they think they can make it with their dollars. Would to God religion could be obtained so easily, but unfortunately it cannot.

No; religion, this highest knowledge and the highest wisdom, cannot be bought, nor can it be acquired from books. You may thrust your head into all the corners of the world, you may explore the Himalayas, the Alps, and the Caucasus, you may sound the bottom of the sea, and pry into every corner of Thibet and the desert of Gobi, you will not find it any where, until your heart is ready for receiving it and your teacher has come. And when

that divinely appointed teacher comes serve him like a child, freely open your heart to his influence, and see in him God manifested. Those who come to seek truth with such a spirit of love and veneration, to them the Lord of Truth reveals the most wonderful things of truth, goodness, and beauty.

Wherever His name is spoken, that very place is holy. How much more so is the man who speaks His name, and with what veneration ought we to approach the man out of whom comes to us spiritual truth. Such great teachers of spiritual truths are indeed very few in number in this world, but the world is never altogether without them. The moment it is absolutely bereft of these, it becomes a hideous hell and hastens on to its destruction. They are always the fairest flowers of human life अहेतुकदयासिन्धुः the ocean of mercy without any motive आचार्येमां विजानीहि "Know the Guru to be Me," says the *Gita*.

Higher and nobler than these are another set of teachers, the Avatāras of Īśvara, in the world. They can transmit spirituality with a touch, even with a mere wish. The lowest and the most degraded characters become in one second saints at their command. They are the Teachers of all teachers, the highest manifestations of God through man. We cannot see God except through them. We cannot help worshipping them; and indeed they are the only ones whom we are bound to worship.

No man can really see God except through these human manifestations. If we try to see God otherwise, we make for ourselves a hideous caricature of Him and believe the caricature to be no worse than the original. There is the story of an ignorant man who was asked to make an image of the God Siva, and who, after days of hard struggle, manufactured only the image of a monkey. So, whenever we try to think of God as He is in His absolute perfection we invariably meet with the most miserable failure; because as long as we are men we cannot conceive Him as anything higher than man. The time will come when we shall transcend our human nature, and know Him as He is; but as long as we are men we must worship Him in man and as man. Talk as you may, try as you may, you cannot think of God except as a man. You may deliver great intellectual discourses on God and on all things under the sun, become very great rationalists, and prove to your satisfaction that all these accounts of the Avatāras of God as man are nonsense. But let us come for a moment to practical common sense. What is there behind this kind of remarkable intellect? Zero, nothing, simply so much froth. When next you hear a man delivering a great intellectual lecture against this worship of the Avatāras of God, get hold of him and ask him what his idea of God is, what he knows by "omnipotence," "omnipresence," and all similar terms, beyond the spelling of the words. He really means nothing by them; he cannot formulate as their meaning any idea unaffected by his own human nature; he is no better off, than the man in the street who has not read a single book. That man in the street, however, is quiet and does not disturb the peace of the world; while

this big talker creates disturbance and misery among mankind. Religion is after all realisation, and we must make the sharpest distinction between talk and intuitive experience. What we experience in the depths of our souls is realisation. Nothing indeed is so uncommon as common sense.

By our present constitution we are limited and bound to see God as man. If the buffaloes want to worship God they will, in keeping with their own nature, see Him as a huge buffalo, if a fish wants to worship God it will have to form an idea of Him as a big fish, and man has to think of Him as man, And these various conceptions are not due to morbidly active imagination. Men, the buffalo, and the fish, all represent so many different vessels so to say. All these vessels go to the sea of God to get filled with water each according to its own shape and capacity; in the man the water takes the shape of man, in the buffalo the shape of a buffalo, and in the fish the shape of a fish. In each of these vessels there is the same water of the sea of God. When men see Him, they see Him as man, and the animals, if they have any conception of God at all, must see Him as animal, each according to its own ideal. So we cannot help seeing God as man, and, therefore, we are bound to worship Him as man. There is no other way.

Two kinds of men do not worship God as man—the human brute who has no religion, and the "Paramhansa," who has risen beyond all the weaknesses of humanity and has transcended the limits of his own human nature. To him all nature has become his own self. He alone can worship God as He is. Here too, as in all other cases, the two extremes meet. The extreme of ignorance and the other extreme of knowledge—neither of these go through acts of worship. The human brute does not worship because of his ignorance, and the *Jivanmuktas* (free souls) do not worship because they have realised God in themselves. Being between these two poles of existence, if any one tells you that he is not going to worship God as man, take kindly care of that man; he is, not to use any harsher term, an irresponsible talker; his religion is for unsound and empty brains.

God understands human failings and becomes man to do good to humanity.

यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत
अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥
परित्राणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम् ।
धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे

Whenever virtue subsides and wickedness prevails I manifest myself. To establish virtue, to destroy evil, to save the good I come from *gyuga to gyuga*.

अवजानन्ति मां मृदा मानुषीं तनुमाश्रितम् ।
परं भावमजानन्तो मम भूतमहेश्वरम् ॥

Fools deride me who have assumed this human form, without knowing my real nature as the Lord of the universe. Such is our Sri Krishna's declaration in the *Gita*.

(To be Continued.)

Correspondence.

NEW YORK, February 19th, 1896.

Om Namo Bhagavate Rāmakrishnāya.

Greetings and blessings to our brethren in India.

Since my last letter an immense amount of work has been accomplished by our beloved teacher in the furtherance of our great cause. The wide interest awakened by his teaching, is shown in the ever increasing number of those who attend the class lessons, and the large crowds that come to hear his public Sunday-lectures. The physical and mental energy he displays in disseminating true Hindu spirituality in this country which, in spite of its much vaunted Christianity, is a through and through materialistic land, seems exhaustless, and fills with awe and admiration all those who have occasion to witness his gigantic efforts; lecturing twice a day, carrying on a vast correspondence, giving interviews and private instructions and preparing literature for the guidance of his followers—all this fills his time from the early morning till late at night, and would long ago have broken down his iron constitution, were it not for his powerful will, nourished by his love for mankind, that gives him the strength to cheerfully carry on his difficult task.

This incessant, untiring activity, to which he is impelled by no other motive than the good of mankind is, indeed, the best object lesson to illustrate his teachings of unselfish work, especially to the American who, though ever active, knows no higher motive power for his activity than the interest of his petty little self. Thus, our teacher gives us in his own person, the example of a true Karma-Yogin, just as in other respects, he proves himself a perfect Bhakta and Jñānin, and as such, a worthy disciple of his great master, Rāmakrishna Paramahansa, whose ideal was the harmonious union in one character of these three great types of humanity.

To supply the great demand for some literature on the Swami's teachings, several of his Sunday lectures have been published in pamphlet form at a nominal price hardly sufficient to cover the expenses. They sell very rapidly, and thus help to carry the Vedānta into regions where the existence of this wonderful system of thought was, perhaps, never before dreamed of. Eight of the Swami's class-lessons on Karma-Yoga are, in print to be published in book form, a sufficient number of copies to pay the cost being already subscribed for in advance. In this work the Swami was greatly assisted by several of his *Grihastha* followers whose unselfish efforts, in behalf of the furtherance of our movement, cannot be commended enough.

Abhayānanda is established in Brooklyn and there propagates the Swami's teachings with well-deserved success. The classes on Vedānta Philosophy are well attended, and the public lectures help to increase the number of the Swami's following.

On Thursday, the 13th of this month, another soul joined the children of Rāmakrishna: Dr. Street took the vow of renunciation, and thus became a *Sanyāsin*. The impressive ceremony was performed by the Swami at the head-quarters, in the presence of the other *Sanyāsins* and a number of *Brahmachārin*s. The name given on this occasion to Dr. Street was Yogānanda.

Besides the numerous *Brahmachārin*s who are preparing themselves for the definite step, this is the third *Sanyāsin* created by the Swami in this land. It shows that the idea of renunciation is coming up, slowly it is true, but surely, that people at last are coming to realise that to be religious, it is not sufficient to merely believe, but that they must live in accordance with what they believe to be true, and that there are even in this country, where everybody clings so strongly to the world and all its vanities, these few at least, to whom the Swami has brought home a strong conviction of the necessity of renunciation as the only means of attaining liberation. The importance of this fact cannot be measured with the standard of your country, where this idea of renunciation is imbibed with the mother's milk, and where without it no religious life can be even imaginable. We must remember that, here, a man may be in the full enjoyment of all the luxuries of this world, may possess money, and wealth, and wife and children and still be regarded as religious, nay even as a great light of the church and a true follower of Him who taught, "Sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.....and take up thy cross, and follow me." Measured by this standard of religious life, and considering the Swami's great reluctance to create *Sanyāsins* in this country, except upon the most urgent insistence of the applicant, the fact of these three people giving up the world for the sake of God and truth, and joining the ranks of your glorious order of *Sanyāsins*, must be regarded as one of the most marvellous evidences of the Swami's powerful influence for good, and should fill with joy the hearts of all true Vedāntins untrammelled by narrow caste and race prejudices.

This, however, is not the only result brought about by our beloved teacher. The strong current of religious thought sent out in his lectures and writings, the powerful impetus given by his teachings to the pursuit of truth without regard to inherited superstitions and prejudices, though working silently and unconsciously, is still exercising a beneficial and lasting effect on the popular mind and so becoming an important factor in the spiritual uplifting of society. Its most palpable manifestation is shown in the growing demand for Vedāntic literature and the frequent use of Sanskrit terms by people from whom one would least expect to hear them: *Ātman*, *Purusha*, *Prakṛiti*, *Moksha*, and similar expressions have acquired full citizenship, and the names of Sankarāchārya, and Rāmānuja

are becoming with many almost as familiar as Huxley and Spencer. The public libraries are running after everything that has reference to India: the books of Max Müller, Colebrooke, Deussen, Burnouf, and of all the authors that have ever written in English on Hindu philosophy, find a ready sale; and even the dry and tiresome, Schopenhauer, on account of his Vedāntic background, is being studied with great eagerness.

People are quick to appreciate the grandeur and beauty of a system which, equally as a philosophy and a religion, appeals to the heart as well as to the reason, and satisfies all the religious cravings of the human nature; especially so, when it is being expounded by one who, like our teacher, with his wonderful oratory is able to rouse at will the dormant love of the divinely sublime in the human soul, and with his sharp and irrefutable logic to easily convince the most stubborn mind of the most scientific matter-of-fact man. No wonder, therefore, that this interest in Hindu thought is to be met with among all classes of society. To give only the opinion of two representatives, an emotional nature, and a scientific mind:—Sarah Bernhardt, the "divine Sarah" as people are pleased to call her, the greatest actress of modern times, sought an interview with the Swami, and expressed to him her admiration for and intense interest in the sublime doctrines of Hinduism; while Nicola Tesla the greatest electrician of this day, when hearing an exposition of the *Sāṅkhya* system given by the Swami a few days ago, candidly admitted the superiority of its cosmogony, to all other accounts, and declared that its teachings as to *Kalpas*, *Prāna*, and *Ākāśa* offered the only rational theory modern science can take, to explain the cosmological problem.

This praiseworthy interest in Hindu thought is not without its counterpart of morbid curiosity after everything occult and uncanny that bears the Indian stamp. People pick up indiscriminately any book on *Yoga*, and without thinking of the necessity of a *Guru* for their guidance, begin the practice in the hope of attaining *Aimā*, *Mahimā*, *Laghimā*, and the remaining five perfections after a few minutes sitting. Just imagine, the nervous, restless American looking at the tip of his nose with as much interest as if it were a ten dollar gold piece, and trying to meditate on the rice and fall not of the stock market but of the *Kundalini*, and his disappointment when, after his gigantic effort to keep still for a few minutes, no *Devī* has made his appearance to present him with a bag of dollars! Fortunately for his ignorance, the danger resulting from these unguarded practices is lessened by his lack of patience to carry on these experiments for any great length of time.

By the way, India better at once make clear her title to the ownership of the Swami. They are about writing his biography for the national Encyclopedia of the United States of America, thus making of him an American "made in India." The time may come, when, even as seven cities disputed with each other for the honor of having

given birth to Homer, seven countries may claim our master as theirs, and thus rob India of the honour of having produced one of the noblest of her children.

K.

Notes and Thoughts.

We have been favoured with the first two numbers of the Sanskrit Journal, a new monthly issued from Kumbhakonam. Any attempt to create a taste amongst our young men for Sanskrit and its literature has our fullest sympathy. Whilst trying to be serviceable to students in other ways it aims at "setting forth in clear language the spirit and the scope of our religion and explaining the religious and ethical basis of our practices and rituals and their *raison d'être*." We welcome the Journal to our ranks and wish it every success.

Referring to those who listen to Swami Vivekānanda the *New York Herald* says:—

There can be no question that the Swami is securing an influential following. Many clergymen have attended his lectures. Indeed, he was invited to lecture before the Dixon Society in this city by Dr. Wright. Some of those who are his pupils are well known in the city. Among the names of those recorded at the Swami's house were Ella Wheeler Wilcox, Mr. and Mrs. Francis Leggett, Mme. Antoinette Stirling, Dr. Allan Day, Miss Emma Thursby and Professor Wyman. Mrs. Ole Bull also is one of his disciples. The Swami has just received an invitation from Mr. John P. Fox to lecture before the Harvard Graduate Philosophical Club. Here he lectures twice daily on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays, in addition to his public lectures on Sunday afternoon.

Now although with regard to the (Being whom all men alike worship, whichever of the (four well-known) ends of man they may desire,—(thus the followers of the Upanishads as the very Knower,—the disciples of Kapila as the perfect first Wise,—those of Patanjali as Him who untouched by pain, action, fruit, or deserts, having assumed a body in order to create, revealed the tradition of the Veda and is gracious to all living beings,—the Mahāśūpata as the Independent one, undefiled by Vaidic or secular violations,—the Śaivas as Śiva, the Vaiṣṇavas as Puruṣottama,—the followers of the Purāṇas as the great Father (Brahmā).—the Ceremonialists as the Soul of the sacrifice,—the Saṅgatas as the Omniscient,—the gāinas as the Unobstructed,—the Mīmāṃsakas as Him who is pointed out as to be worshipped,—the Chārvākas as Him who is established by the convention of the world,—the followers of the Nyāya as Him who is all that is said worthy of Him,—why further detail? whom even the artisans themselves worship as the great artisan, Viśvakarman.)—although I say, with regard to that Being, the adorable Śiva, whom all recognise throughout the world as universally acknowledged like castes, families, family invocations of Agni, schools, social customs, &c., how can there arise any doubt? and what then is there to be ascertained?—Cowell's *Kuśa-mānjali*.

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